



Clan Bell and the MacMillan Sept Claims

By Joseph L. Bell
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Clan Bell has been a driving force in the history that makes Scotland so fascinating. Starting as knights in Northern France, the Bells fought in the Norman conquest, in the Crusades, and more. Bells have been Knights Templar, master masons for beautiful castles in Scotland, and fought for Scottish independence.

Fighting to survive on the Scottish Border as reivers, Bells were known as one of the Devil's Dozen, the 13 strongest and most active of the riding clans. Bells thrived under hardship, so much that Scots needed the proverb: "*numerous as the Bells of Middlebie.*" A Bell carried Kinmont Willie of the Armstrong clan over his shoulders during the battle to free him during the raid of Carlisle Castle. The Bells from Scotland and from England were lined up across from each other at the Battle of Solway Moss, and refused to fight their cousins. England and Scotland gave a war, but Bells turned it into a family reunion.

Bells have been inventors and thought leaders in many professions, invented the telephone, mechanical reaper, pioneered steamships, and advanced knowledge in medicine, forensic science, and the law. Bell entrepreneurs created companies that advanced aviation with helicopters and the first supersonic jet, and of course the "Scottish" food of Taco Bell. A Bell was founding co-publisher of Encyclopedia Britannica. A Bell founded Bell's Whisky – which is a best-selling scotch in Scotland, the UK and South Africa. A Bell was the author of "The Principles of the Laws of Scotland" that taught law to generations of lawyers.

When England and Scotland united into the United Kingdom, a first priority was to send the most unruly of the unruly Bell clan to Northern Ireland in order to help pacify the Scottish border. Many Bells migrated to Northern Ireland, the United States, Australia, Canada and other nations. The story of Bells is still being written by our families bound together by friendship, fellowship, and a rich and proud history.¹

Bells who could join Clan Bell may feel they were cheated by historical errors that claimed Bell was a sept of another name. The information below corrects some errors, to help Bells deprived in this way.

The MacMillan Claim of a Bell Sept Is Not Valid

Although MacMillans are fine Scots and it is appealing that they want to consider Bells part of their extended family, the facts prove the sept claim is false and it dilutes the honor that is due to the Bells.

The term "sept" has two definitions:

1. *First are the men of the clan who were related by blood and formed separate divisions,*
2. *Second were individuals and groups who looked for and received protection of the clan.*²

The mid-18th century name change of MacMillans (of the MacIlvoyle names) to Bell fails to create a Bell sept of Clan MacMillan under both definitions of a sept:

A related group of MacMillans changing their names to Bell created a Bell-named sept of Clan Bell, even if they all later showed loyalty to MacMillan as individuals while keeping the Bell name. The Lord Lyon Court policy is that "*where a particular sept has traditionally been associated with a particular clan it would not be appropriate for that name to be treated by another clan chief as one of its septs.*"³

The name change to Bell around the time of Culloden was likely to give these ex-MacMillans protection using the Bell surname. These ex-MacMillans were therefore a Bell-named sept of Clan Bell.

¹ Bell history is too amazing to fully footnote here. To learn more, join Clan Bell at <http://www.ClanBell.org>

² House of Gordon, "Family & Septs", *House of Gordon*, <http://www.houseofgordon.com/>

³ The Court of the Lord Lyon, "Who is a member of a clan?", *The Court of the Lord Lyon*, (Archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180627072357/http://www.lyon-court.com/lordlyon/240.html>)



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The ex-MacMillans who changed their names to Bell did so after a dispute with Clan MacMillan, and there is no valid Bell sept of Clan MacMillan. The small percentage of Bells who can trace their genealogy to the names of McIlvoyle were even considered a distinct group from MacMillan before the name change.

Ex-MacMillans named Bell were not called Bell before the name change and then totally changed their names to Bell. Therefore, it was never correct for Bell to be a considered sept of MacMillan.

Some of the failed Clan MacMillan arguments for a Bell sept include:

- Cormac, Bishop of Dunkeld, is not related to Bell clergy present at Dunkeld over 130 years later. Cormac had no last name (typical in Scotland at his time), but Bells did (common in France but not Scotland at their time), and Bells were likely in Scotland to reduce Celtic Church influence.
- The name of Gilbert le fitz Bel in 1304 was not equivalent to “McBell” (recorded in 1666 and 1795). A Donald le fitz Can appears in English records for Donald McCan/Cahan in the 1300s, but there is plenty of evidence for McCan/McCann and a conspicuous lack of McBell and Mhaoil evidence, so Gilbert le fitz Bel as “Gilbert McBell” or “Gilbert Mhaoil” is unlikely.
 - Descendants of Gilbert le fitz Bel living around Annandale do not match MacMillan DNA results, so there is physical evidence against him being related to MacMillans.
- Robert Bell of Berwickshire in 1427 and an unnamed MacMillan in England with similar coats of arms is a coincidence since a chevron with 3 stars is a very popular design used by at least 37 unique surnames. It is very unlikely that Robert Bell and the unnamed MacMillan were related.
- The power of MacMillan chiefs was reduced after Culloden (around the time of the name change to Bell) so that the chiefs could not command allegiance to Clan MacMillan in some areas.
 - It is ironic that the historic setting with the most diminished power for MacMillan chiefs is used as the basis for claiming Bell as a sept of MacMillan.
- Phonetic changes to arbitrarily get to “Bell” do not create a valid sept claim. The old MacMillan names were closer to “Gullible” and could have been changed to other English names, instead.
- The total change of names in the parish register to Bell is not explained by arbitrary phonetics, showing a great need to change to Bell for protection. Even protection “by the Bell surname” would make the ex-MacMillans a sept of Bell, by definition and by Lord Lyon Court policy.
- A small number of people named “McBell” and a Bell gravestone with an ancient MacMillan name respects family heritage but does not create an argument for a Bell sept of MacMillan.

Additional refutation of the MacMillan claim of a Bell sept includes:

- A name change to Bell means the group is assumed to be part of Clan Bell, and not MacMillan, per Lord Lyon Court policy. This prevents a group taking over another name.
- Tartan books are not reliable on sept matters, often reflecting one person’s opinion of name groups in a clan’s area. Tartan books have a commercial bias to lump many names into clans with a tartan to avoid stocking additional tartans and to not have any name that does not have a tartan.
- A rough estimate of relative populations has people named Bell (but not related to MacMillans) outnumbering the former MacMillan-Bells by about ten to one (91% versus 9%).

The MacMillan arguments all fail badly when given a critical examination that looks for the underlying facts needed to support them.



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MacMillan Historians Had Doubts About Arguments to Claim Bell as Their Sept

In his book *“The MacMillans and Their Septs”*, Rev. Somerled MacMillan notes his inability to explain why MacMillans changed their name to Bell:

*“Only in certain parts of Argyll do we find this branch of the clan termed “Na Belaich” who, for some strange reason, have adopted the name ‘Bell’ in English. Those Bells are actually descendants of the MacMillans in Glen Aray and Glen Shira.”*⁴

This is not the sort of statement a historian makes when they have a strong argument, or can give a plausible reason for something. In his book on MacMillan septs, Somerled MacMillan only noted the name change to Bell without explanation and did not make other arguments for a Bell sept claim.

Several factors created pressure for later MacMillan historians to explain the Bell sept and name change:

- The tartan books list Bell as a sept of MacMillan and this creates expectations for a story.
- People with the Bell surname who traced their Bell genealogy to MacMillan ancestors in Inveraray and Glenaray wanted a story for the name change.
- A desire to show more past accomplishments for the clan by claiming additional sept names, and the accomplishments of the Bells are significant.^{5 6}

Even the most intelligent and sincere people are in a difficult position when obligated to defend a weak debate position with few feasible theories. Although the discussion below criticizes the various bad MacMillan arguments, we should have both respect and sympathy for the difficult situation of those who tried to defend a weak debate position out of loyalty to their extended families.

The Scope of the Name Change to Bell was Total

The Clan MacMillan website notes the truly remarkable scope of the name change:

*“The Old Parish Registers indicate a remarkable fading of this hitherto flourishing clan in the 1700s; which after two entries in the 1760s, disappears altogether. Even the most ruthless clearances of the next century failed to achieve so complete a wiping out of an ancient tribe. The records also reveal, however, an equally extraordinary blooming of Bells at exactly the same time; a name hitherto unknown in this Parish Register.”*⁷

The fact that the name change to Bell that was total in scope, indicates that these ex-MacMillans needed protection by using the Bell surname. A choice by a church clerk or a popular fashion to change to English names is inadequate to explain how the ancient MacMillan names of McIlvoile and McIlvoyle disappeared completely. *“Even the most ruthless clearances of the next century failed to achieve so complete a wiping out of an ancient tribe.”*⁸

⁴ Somerled MacMillan, *The MacMillans and Their Septs*, (Glasgow: K. and R. Davidson, 1952), 111.

⁵ James Elton Bell, *One Hundred & Twenty Five Bell Families Contribute to History*, (Tucson, AZ: Bell Book Bank, Ltd., 2016).

⁶ Clan Bell North America, “Bells Invented the Modern World”, *CBNA Home Page*, <http://www.clanbell.org/images/BellsInvented.pdf>

⁷ Clan MacMillan, “Highland Bells - Na Belaich”, <http://www.clanmacmillan.org/pages/members/septs/bell.html>

⁸ *Ibid.*



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A more thorough analysis of these points follows, with some necessary repetition. The analysis of most arguments also includes attachments for even more detail and sources to allow interested readers to independently evaluate the conclusions.⁹

Cormac, Bishop of Dunkeld, Is Not Related to Bell Clergy in Dunkeld Over 130 Years Later

MacMillans claimed that Cormac, bishop of Dunkeld from 1116 to 1132 AD, is somehow related to the Bell surnamed clergy who appear in Dunkeld over 130 years later. Cormac had no last name, as was common in Scotland in 1132 AD. However, the Bell clergy had their surname in 1263 AD, which was not common in Scotland until much later. The Bell surname was common in France as early as 960 AD.

Scottish kings after 1124 AD worked to remove Celtic Church influence and were therefore likely to bring clergy to Dunkeld from France or England in order to reduce the Celtic Church influence. The desire of Scottish kings and church leaders to remove Celtic Church influence makes it more likely that the Bell clergy in Dunkeld after 1263 AD were from outside of Scotland and NOT related to Cormac.

See Attachment 1 for sources and information on the Cormac claim.

Gilbert le fitz Bel of Dumfries Was Not a MacMillan or McBell

MacMillans claimed that the name Gilbert le fitz Bel, which appears in Dumfries in 1304, is a Norman-French equivalent of Gilbert MacBell/Mhaoil. Substituting the Gaelic patronymic prefix “Mac” for French patronymic prefix of “le fitz” is the first step in this speculation. An example of this substitution is Donald McCan listed as Donald le fitz Can, but the many records of McCanns, in contrast to the lack of evidence and a huge time gap for any MacBell or Mhaoil makes this name substitution credible for Donald McCan but not credible for Gilbert le fitz Bel.

Donald le fitz Can appears in English records for Donald McCan/Cahan in the 1300s, and there are many instances of McCan. In contrast, there is no instance of McBell in records until 1666, or 1795 tax records in Richmond Co., North Carolina.¹⁰ This large time gap from 1304 to 1666/1795 for the McBell / Mhaoil names makes it very unlikely that Gilbert le fitz Bel was a MacBell or in any way related to MacMillans.

This claim also fails on the historic and DNA data because “*The Bells of Annandale are said to be descended from Gilbert le fiz Bel, who was deprived of his lands by Edward I*”¹¹ as a result of Gilbert le fitz Bel fighting against Edward I along with William Wallace.¹² The lack of MacMillan DNA results around Annandale is further evidence against this MacMillan claim.

See Attachment 2 for sources and information on the Gilbert le fitz Bel claim.

The Coat of Arms for Robert Bell of Berwickshire in 1427 Versus English MacMillan Arms

MacMillans claimed that the similar coats of arms for Robert Bell of Berwickshire in 1427, and for an unnamed MacMillan in England, is in some way evidence that the ancestors of at least some of Bells could also have been MacMillans.

⁹ It is appealing that MacMillans want Bells in their extended family, but the facts do not support their sept claim.

¹⁰ Clan MacMillan, “Highland Bells - Na Belaich”, <http://www.clanmacmillan.org/pages/members/septs/bell.html>

¹¹ Bain, Joseph. *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland Preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office London*, (Edinburgh, 1888), Vol. II, 397.

¹² James Elton Bell and Frances Jean Bell, *Sir Robert Bell and His Early Virginia Colony Descendants*, (Tucson, AZ: Wheatmark, 2007), 21.



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Both of these coats of arms have a chevron and three stars. The third son of any family could choose three stars as cadency marks to indicate that he is a third son, and use three of the cadency symbol for a third son for emphasis. The star, or mullet, is also interpreted in heraldry as the rowlet of a spur, so any person who likes riding horses might choose this design. The chevron and three star coat of arms design is one of the most popular in heraldry. In fact, there are at least 37 unique surnames with coats of arms that have a chevron and three stars or mullets in the design, so there is no reason to believe the owners of these coats of arms are related.

See Attachment 3 for sources and information on the coat of arms common ancestry claim.

Lyon Court Position: Every Person with the Chief's Surname is Deemed a Member of the Clan

Some MacMillan families in Glen Aray and Glen Shira changed their name to Bell in the middle of the 18th century (mostly after Culloden). This name change does not make Bell a sept of MacMillan, but rather creates the assumption that these people with the Bell surname and Bell lineage to MacMillans are members of Clan Bell -- unless they gave specific allegiance to Clan MacMillan or another clan.

This is consistent with the Lord Lyon Court position on clan membership and septs, and this policy statement shows that there is no legal basis for the MacMillan claim of Bell as their sept.:

“Every person who has the same surname as the chief is deemed to be a member of the clan. Equally a person who offers allegiance to the chief is recognised as a member of the clan unless the chief decides that he will not accept that person's allegiance.

There is no official list of recognised septs. This is a matter for each chief to determine. But where a particular sept has traditionally been associated with a particular clan it would not be appropriate for that name to be treated by another clan chief as one of its septs.”¹³

Without this Lyon Court policy, any group could change their names and assume effective ownership of an existing name, as the MacMillan sept claim of Bell does.

See Attachment 4 for sources and information on the Lyon Court policy on clan sept claims.

MacMillan Chief Was Likely Not Owed Allegiance by Bell / Ex-MacMillans After Culloden

The evidence of a name change from parish registers has only one entry for a Bell baptism (in 1743) before the battle Culloden (which was in 1746). The next Bell names in the parish register were in 1757 and later. The historic context after Culloden would still explain the name change to Bell as proof that the ex-MacMillans are a Bell-named sept of Bell.

The 1743 name change to Bell was the first example of a name change to Bell, and the only example before Culloden. All the remaining name changes to Bell were after Culloden. The 1743 name change to Bell was likely a model for others to follow after Culloden (if an arbitrary name change is assumed.)

The historic situation after Culloden reduced the ability of MacMillan clan chiefs to command allegiance to their clan. The casualties from the battle of Culloden devastated Clan MacMillan leadership who were positioned at the front line on the right flank of the Jacobite forces. There was strong and continued pressure from government-supporting lairds and ministers attacking the old ways. A MacMillan clan chief

¹³ The Court of the Lord Lyon, “Who is a member of a clan?”, *The Court of the Lord Lyon*, <http://www.lyon-court.com/lordlyon/240.html>
(Archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180627072357/http://www.lyon-court.com/lordlyon/240.html>)



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lost his lands due to poverty, yet retained his position as chief. Retribution from the Redcoats on Highland clans, whether they participated in Culloden or not, strongly motivated MacMillan clan members to either reject or hide their association with Clan MacMillan by changing names for self-preservation.

The MacMillans changing their names to Bell did not show allegiance to the MacMillan chief with the name change, and it is not realistic to assume people did not know that a church clerk recorded their names as Bell. The Bell name change formed a new division of Clan Bell from at least two MacMillan families, who looked for and received protection from current threats by using the Bell surname. The new division formed and the name change from MacMillan to Bell for protection meets both definitions of a sept – as a sept of Bell, even though these Bell-named people are related by blood to the MacMillan name of McIlvoyle (which disappeared parish rolls after the name change to Bell).

It is ironic that the historic setting with the most diminished power for MacMillan chiefs is used as the basis for claiming Bell as a sept of MacMillan.

See Attachment 5 for sources and information on the parish registers for Bell name changes

See Attachment 6 for sources and information on the impact of Culloden on MacMillan chiefs

Phonetic Arguments for an Arbitrary MacMillan Mass Name Change to Bell

MacMillan phonetic arguments on the many possible transformations needed to get from Mhaoil to Bell may sound incredible to a modern English speaker. However, these arguments are actually correct linguistically in Gaelic. However, in most other languages, this kind of transformation can quickly lead to nonsense.

This flexibility in the Gaelic language may contribute to the incorrect view that any existing name that could be phonetically transformed to be like a MacMillan name was available to use without any strings.

The Gaelic MacMillan names of *Gilibile* or *Gillemhaoil*, and even *McIlvoil* sound closer to the English word “Gullible” than they sound to Bell. Other English names like Abel, Lovell, or Merrill also sound similar to the MacMillan names and those other English names could have been chosen instead of Bell.

If the MacMillan name change to Bell was the result of an arbitrary choice, so there is nothing to stop them from changing back except for the inconvenience of changing names. In fact, changing their names back to McBell or MacMillan would honor their Gaelic heritage. However, the Bell sept claim would be undermined, since there was no basis for arbitrarily using the identity of the existing Border Clan Bell clan over some other English surname.

The Lyon Court’s policy that a person with the name of the chief is assumed to be a member of the clan still applies, making the MacMillan Bell sept claim phonetic arguments contrary to Lyon Court policy. The definitions of a sept can also be applied to show that the Bells who can trace their genealogy to MacMillans are part of a Bell-named sept of Clan Bell, and not a sept of MacMillan.

The phonetic arguments fail to explain to why there was a total change of the ancient McIlvoile names to the Bell surname.

The Bells from MacMillan areas, who were related to MacMillan (actually McIlvoyle) by blood, created a confirmation bias that called for some kind of explanation, and this was a good and noble motive for MacMillan trying the phonetic arguments. That does not make the phonetic arguments a valid justification for the MacMillan sept claim.



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See Attachment 7 for sources and information on the Phonetic Arguments.

Tartan Books Are Not Reliable on Septs

Tartan books are not an authoritative source on septs. In fact, the septs listed in tartan books are nothing more than one person's opinion, usually during the Victorian era,¹⁴ and biased toward Highland clans. Tartan books are also biased against Lowland Scots (like the Border Bells) and clans without a tartan.

The tartan books reflect the commercial bias of Victorian era tartan sellers, who wanted everyone to have a tartan, but did not want the extra expense of stocking additional tartans. Their commercial interests were best served by combining many sept names into clans with existing tartans.

Lowland Scots with names that did not have tartans could be encouraged to buy a tartan using the tartan book listing their family name as a sept of a Highland clan, regardless of historical facts. Any statement in a tartan book that a specific clan or name did not actually have a tartan was not good for business.

The tartan books applied some person's opinion of which name groups were in a particular clan's territory. This opinion of tartan book authors might not consider or know the actual allegiance of the name group within a clan's territory, the relative power of a clan chief to command allegiance to his clan within the clan's territory, or the changing historical situation.

See Attachment 8 for sources and information on authority for sept determinations

Relative Population Estimate of the Border Bells Versus the MacMillan Bells

It is difficult to make an estimate of the number of people currently named Bell who are from the Border Bells versus the Bells who could trace their origin to MacMillan areas in a way that is internally consistent, or to calculate an estimate from comprehensive data taken at a similar time that is relevant to the question. Therefore, some arbitrary judgment is required and the results will be subject to challenge on assumptions and gaps in data.

The estimate results of 9% MacMillan-Bells versus 91% Border Bells is subject to the problems associated with any estimate, but roughly shows how misleading it is for MacMillan to claim Bell as a sept. Even if the MacMillan-Bell percentage was higher, the sept claim still has misleading aspects on the relative size of these two groups.

A rough estimate of the Border Bell versus MacMillan Bells population percentage was made from the UK 1891 census results by county. The percentage of Border Bells versus MacMillan Bells was then crudely estimated by UK county from UK census heat maps for the family names from Public Profiler.¹⁵

It would be fair to criticize this exercise in estimation as one seeking answers for a question that does not have strong evidence to back it up. This is a reason to be charitable to the MacMillan historians who were seeking to answer other difficult questions that call for some kind of answer.

¹⁴Sir Crispin Agnew of Lochnaw Bt., "Clans, Families and Septs", *Clans, Families and Septs*, http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/clans_families_septs.htm

"It should also be said that the various Sept lists, which are published in the various Clans and Tartan books, have no official authority. They merely represent some person's, (usually in the Victorian eras) views of which name groups were in a particular clan's territory."

¹⁵ See <http://named.publicprofiler.org> and enter a surname to create a map of where surnames are unusually prevalent in the UK, compared with the local general population



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In this estimate, the people named Bell (who are NOT related to MacMillan) are roughly 10 times larger than the relevant (blood-related to MacMillan) part of the clan that claimed the Bell name as their sept. The issue that the MacMillan Bell sept claim misrepresents the relative size of groups is relevant to the sept question, since the sept claim creates unavoidable confusion for people named Bell.

See Attachment 9 for sources and information on the rough estimation of Bells vs MacMillans

McBell and Other MacMillan Sept Names

Some MacMillans have changed their name from Bell to McBell, or added ancient MacMillan names to family gravestones to preserve their Gaelic heritage. These historic instances do not in any way argue for a Bell sept of MacMillan.

The McBell name change shows that MacMillans can choose to change their names to recognize their MacMillan origins. This is not to advocate that the Bells with MacMillan genealogy change their names, but rather that Clan MacMillan should drop their claim to a Bell sept, but keep the McBell sept.

Adding an ancient MacMillan name to a Bell gravestone is a way to recognize MacMillan heritage and blood relationship without a name change. An example of adding an ancient MacMillan name to a Bell family gravestone is the gravestone erected in 1897 in Inveraray for Angus Bell.

See Attachment 10 for sources and information on the McBell name and the Angus Bell gravestone.

Conclusions

Clan MacMillan does not need a Bell sept in order to preserve their heritage, since the McBell sept is available as a substitute and the McBell sept is an effective way to discuss the Bell name connection.

MacMillan historians needed some kind of explanation to address the Bells with MacMillan ancestors who “*for some strange reason, have adopted the name ‘Bell’*”¹⁶ as a result to the MacMillan claim of Bell as a sept. Somerled MacMillan wisely limited his discussion of the Bell sept to a puzzled comment on the reason for the name change to Bell. None of the later MacMillan arguments for a Bell sept stand up to critical examination. The Bell sept claim by Clan MacMillan should now be dismissed as wrong based on better information.

In contrast, Clan Bell has a clear basis to claim the ex-MacMillan Bells as a Bell-named sept of Clan Bell, even though these Bells are related by blood to MacMillans (McIlvoyles).

It is correct for Clan MacMillan to note:

- 1) Bell is not a sept of MacMillan
- 2) It was never correct to consider Bell a sept of MacMillan
- 3) A group of MacMillans sought and received protection using the Bell surname, and
- 4) Only those Bells with lineage to the Highlands before 1743 are related to McIlvoyle.
- 5) Calling Bell a “related name” to MacMillan is misleading since the McIlvoyle name changed to Bell as a rejection of MacMillan ties after a clan dispute, and the McIlvoyle name was considered separate from the MacMillan name long before the name change to Bell.

The Chief of Clan MacMillan is held in high regard by Clan Bell, and some Bells have been leaders in Clan MacMillan organizations. Invalid arguments made in the past by MacMillans for the Bell sept

¹⁶ Somerled MacMillan, “*The MacMillans and Their Septs*”, 111.



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should not be taken to reflect poorly on MacMillans. However, all of the arguments for the MacMillan claim of a Bell sept were bad arguments and should be abandoned going forward.

Note that stating that there is no valid MacMillan Bell sept, and never was a valid MacMillan Bell sept, is different from saying that no Bells were ever (related to) MacMillans.¹⁷ It is clear that a small percentage of all people named Bell could trace their Bell lineage to ancient MacMillan names in the Highlands. It is also clear that individuals can choose allegiance to any clan, making septs and related names irrelevant compared to their individual choice.

The significant accomplishments of Bells listed in “Bells Invented the Modern World” were all done by Bells who are not from the MacMillan names. Therefore, it is misleading for Clan MacMillan to claim any of these Bells as part of their debunked claim of Bell as a sept of MacMillan.

See Attachment 11 for sources and information on the paternal genealogy of accomplished Bells who are all from the Border Bells, and NOT from MacMillan.

The loss from this effective identity theft and stolen accomplishments from generations of Bells is compounded by the badly failed arguments given by Clan MacMillan to justify their Bell sept claim. If someone is going to steal the identity and honor due to a clan of border reivers, they should at least extend the professional courtesy of having some good excuses. Many countries have laws against identity theft and stolen valor for falsely claiming the honor due to others. The enforcement of sept issues is not a systematic or transparent process, but patient Bells can pursue it with detailed evidence and careful analysis presented in the proper forums.

¹⁷ Clan MacMillan, “Highland Bells - Na Belaich”, <http://www.clanmacmillan.org/pages/members/septs/bell.html>
"An appreciation of Reverend Somerled MacMillan's family history is important because his own brief references to it have been erroneously used by some to suggest that Somerled was always a Bell and never really a MacMillan; and indeed that no Bells were ever MacMillans! A proper understanding of the use of (or more to the point, the non-use of) surnames in the Gaidhealtachd soon dispenses such a myth."

This odd quote from the Clan MacMillan website seems to not understand the Bell arguments against the MacMillan Bell sept claim, and to misapply them as an absolute statement that Bells with MacMillan ancestry do not exist, but this cannot be verified due to the lack of a reference or a direct quote.

See Attachment 1 on the refutation of the arguments on Cormac and the Bell clergy over 130 years later in Dunkeld for a better understanding of the use of surnames in many nations, and not just in the Scottish-Gaelic speaking culture of the Scottish Highlands and Islands (i.e., the *Gaidhealtachd*).